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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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WHOOPING CRANES ON ARANSAS REFUGE GET MORE PROTECTION

Greater protection will be afforded the sole surviving flock of whooping cranes which winter on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas by closing to waterfowl hunting an additional 4,640 acres of land and water areas adjoining the refuge, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay said today.

The order signed by Secretary McKay constitutes a revision and enlargement of the closed area boundary originally covered by a Presidential Proclamation of April 15, 1941. This enlargement of the closed area includes a whooping crane wintering area. Additional protection will also be given to an increasing goose concentration. The revised boundary will facilitate posting and law enforcement by following clearly defined offshore reefs.

Secretary McKay explained that this action strengthens the national wildlife refuge system and furthers the waterfowl conservation program of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Under migratory bird treaties with Canada and Mexico, the United States is obligated to take measures to insure the preservation of migratory waterfowl and to provide refuge zones in which the shooting of these birds is prohibited.

The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge was established by an Executive Order of December 31, 1937, on the Blackjack Peninsula of Texas. About halfway down the Texas coast, some 75 miles north of Corpus Christi, the peninsula lies inside Matagorda Island from which it is separated by the Intracoastal Waterway. The refuge covers about 47,000 acres.

Established for the protection of all kinds of wildlife, Aransas is best known as the wintering home of the world's last flock of whooping cranes, one of North America's largest and rarest birds. In 1954 the wintering population of these birds dropped to 21 adults. At the present time the whoopers are concluding their long southward flight from their Canadian breeding grounds to the sanctuary of the Aransas Refuge. On October 18 the first birds arrived, two adults and one young. Two other birds flying southward have been sighted in Kansas.

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